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Case Study 4
Approved For Release
Management Seminar VII

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25 April 1975

Technical Panel Case Study

Office of Communications

This case study concerns a current management activity involving the staffing, rotation, training and career management necessary to fill 300 Electronics Specialist positions within and outside the Office of Communications.

The purpose of the study is to analyze worldwide technical requirements on a broad basis, consider the present Table of Organization and evaluate technical specialization to determine: 1) is the present T/O adequate to meet current and projected technical requirements; 2) is it advisable, or even possible, to organize the technical staff into specialization categories with long-term career objectives; 3) can the present ES/ET and ES-C/ET-C categories be integrated into a single job category and if so, determine the method, rate of integration and long range objectives.

Of major concern is the extensive technical training required to keep pace with ever-advancing technology. Staffing must reflect sufficient training overhead to allow adequate personnel preparation and at the same time, minimize rotational underlaps. In general, technical systems comprised of a number of equipments, such as ultra-high frequency, computer, satellite communications and data transmission systems, require training time in the order of four to eight weeks. Duty assignments to components within and outside OC are usually two or three years. Frequently six to nine months or more are required for recently trained technicians to achieve the desired proficiency level in the more sophisticated communications systems. The net result of such lengthy training and familiarization periods is to decrease the overall effectiveness of the technical staff unless personnel are retained in one position or speciality field for longer periods.

The attached Table of Organization indicates authorized positions and present personnel strengths at various grade levels, defines position titles and summarizes personnel assignments outside the Office of Communications. The following data impacts upon the analysis of this case study and is submitted as background information.

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2. There are [REDACTED] facilities with approximately [REDACTED] technicians assigned. In addition, there is a communications training facility and a technical services facility which handles all repair and return and logistics functions for technical hardware.

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3. [REDACTED] positions are classified as OSG (Overseas Support Group) subject to TDY and must be considered to some degree.

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4. [REDACTED] positions are considered "Pipeline" slots and are utilized to minimize field underlaps during personnel rotations.
5. Approximately 15% of the personnel at grades 11 and 12 are on some type of "Hold" negating overseas assignment.
6. GS-12 and GS-13 personnel are predominantly in the 38-42 age group. There are no technical positions above GS-13.
7. GS-12 and GS-13 personnel are normally considered to be in supervisory capacities, however, components outside the Office often require skill levels of these senior technicians for production work. The result is that personnel assigned outside OC often lack opportunity for supervisory experience and are less competitive than their peers.
8. Up to a few years ago, ET and ES personnel were primarily trained in radio systems and clandestine systems which were radio oriented and were considered to be more proficient with purely electronics equipments and systems. ET-C and ES-C personnel were trained primarily in teletype, cryptographic and computer systems and more recently, in digital transmission systems. Due to the ratio of positions in these categories, when cross-training was necessary or possible many more ET/ES personnel were cross-trained than ET-C/ES-C. The result has been a general weakening of ES-C competitiveness in evaluation for supervisory and management positions where cross-training is desirable and often mandatory.

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9. GS-9 journeyman technicians have received training in all basic skills including high frequency radio, cryptographic and teletype equipment installation and maintenance. There are still GS-9 technicians on duty who are classified as ET or ET-C and who are not cross-trained. The lack of cross training is even more evident in the higher grade levels because mandatory cross-training was only implemented a few years ago and was limited to newly hired technicians.
10. There is an obvious over-strength of ES-C personnel at grades 11, 12, and 13. Unless some immediate action is taken to alleviate the situation it can only escalate in the coming years to the point of being unmanageable.
11. For the technical staff within OC at present, there is virtually no long-term career development for grades 9, 11, and 12 and "training for assignment" is the rule rather than the exception.
12. Acknowledged specialty fields for which OC is responsible include, but are not limited to numerous data transmission systems, several computer switching systems, staff and clandestine satellite systems and secure voice systems. In the past, basic radio, cryptographic and teletype equipments and systems were predominant and the specialty systems were minimal. Recently, rapid advances in technology have enabled OC and outside components to acquire the very latest in communications systems. Unfortunately, OC technical staffing and training has lagged behind the "state of the art" sufficiently to create numerous difficulties with assignments and personnel career development.

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Category Definitions

- ET Grade 7 through 9 electronic technicians, generally cross-trained to crypto/teletype. Several on duty who lack cross-training.
- ET-C Cryptographic technicians, generally teletype trained. No longer being hired. Few of those on duty considered cross-trained to ET.
- ES Grade 10 through 13 electronic technicians. Many lack cross-training. Grades 12 and 13 supervisory or management positions.

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Table of Organization Cont'd

- ES-C Generally senior cryptographic, digital data and computer technicians. Few are considered cross-trained or have radio theory background.
- 8/7 GS-9 is the journeyman level. Grades 7 and 8 are non-competitive; most technicians are hired at these grades and remain on evaluation status for six months to a year.